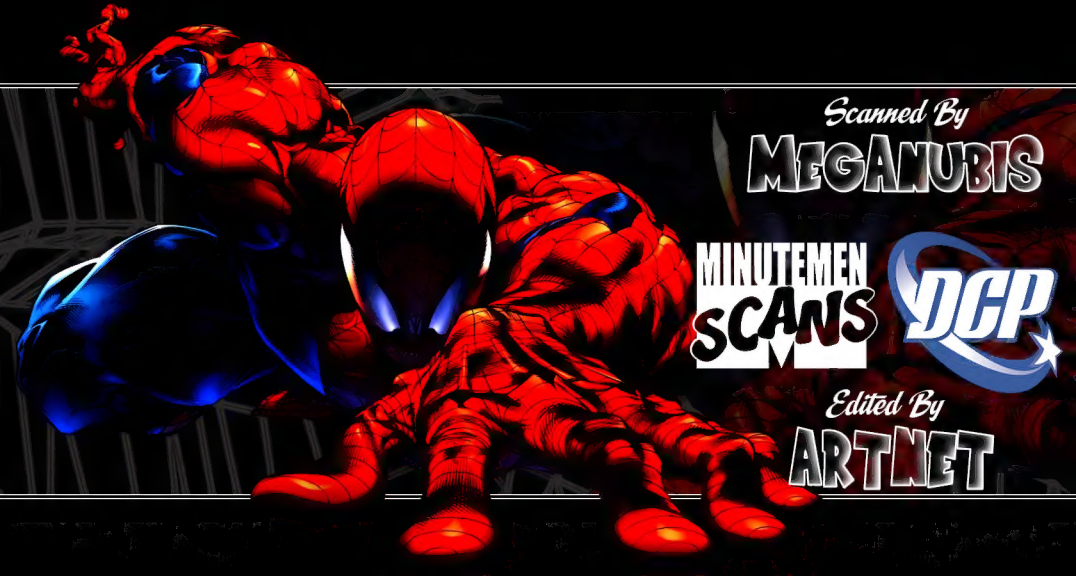
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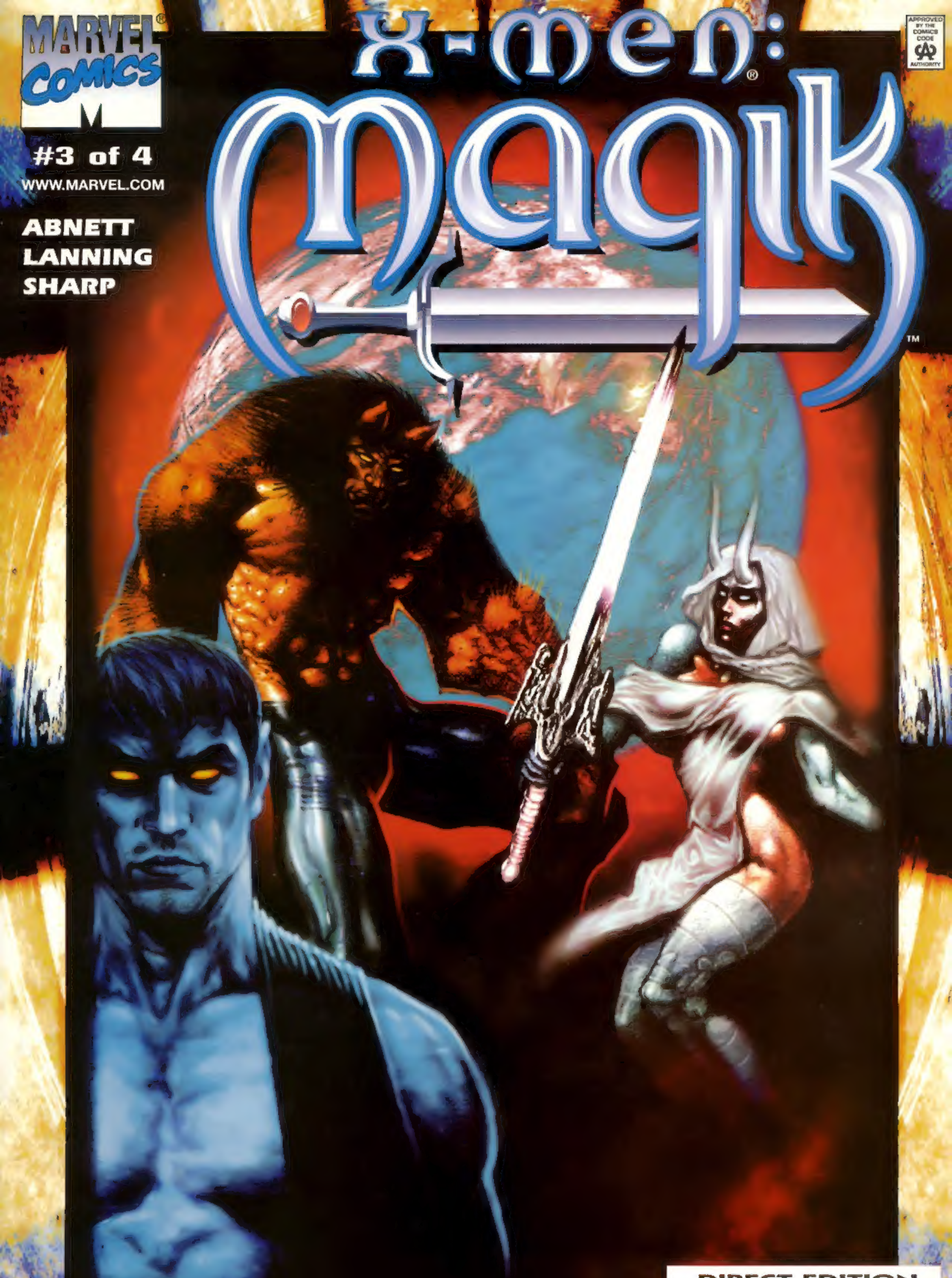

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MY CITADEL! TEARING APART AROUND ME!

WHAT IN THE NAME OF ALL CREATION IS THIS, MAGIK?

IF YOU'D *LISTEN* TO ME INSTEAD OF *FIGHTING* ME, MEPHISTO, YOU MIGHT HAVE LEARNED BY NOW...

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AMANDA SEFTON ONCE LIVED THE UNUSUAL LIFE OF A POWERFUL SORCERESS AND ALLY TO THE UNCANNY X-MEN. BUT NOW, AFTER THE EVENTS OF BLACK SUN, SHE FINDS HERSELF ARMED WITH A MAGICAL SOULSWORD AND STEPPING DISKS, CARRYING ON THE LEGACY OF MAGIK, GUARDIAN OF LIMBO! STAN LEE PRESENTS: MAGIK IN

THE FALL OF HADES

DAN ABNETT & ANDY LANNING STORY
LIAM MCCORMACK SHARP ART
SHARPEFONT & PT LETTERS • KEVIN SOMERS COLORS
MIKE RAICHT ASSISTANT • MIKE MARTS EDITOR • JOE QUESADA CHIEF

"...THAT AN ABOMINABLE, UNNAMED FORCE OF DESTRUCTION IS LAYING WASTE TO THE *SPLINTER REALMS* ONE BY ONE!

"ALREADY *MUSPELHEIM* AND THE REALMS OF *NIGHTMARE* AND *DORMAMMU* HAVE FALLEN.

"I CAME ALL THE WAY FROM *LIMBO*, THE REALM I AM SWORN TO PROTECT, TO WARN *YOU*, LORD OF LIES...

"...THAT *YOUR* KINGDOM--*HELL*-- IS *NEXT!*

"BUT I AM *TOO LATE!* THE ENEMY IS *HERE!*"

"EVEN NOW, THE *BEAST LEGIONS* WHO GUARD YOUR HIGH WALLS OF *HELL* ARE FIGHTING AND *DYING*...

"...THEIR SAVAGERY AND BRUTE STRENGTH *NO MATCH* FOR THE RAZOR-SHARP *STORM-FORMS* THAT BILLOW IN THE VANGUARD OF THE ENEMY TEMPEST.

"FLESH AND STEEL WILL *FAIL*, GRANITE WALLS WILL BE *OVERRUN*... EVEN MAGIC AND LIGHT WILL BE *CHOKED*."

NO! NO FORCE IN NATURE OR SUPERNATURE DARES DEFY THE GREAT MEPHISTO SO!

WELL THEN, HERE'S THE CHANCE TO MAKE THAT POINT, DECEITFUL ONE...

...BECAUSE THE ENEMY IS UPON US!

AND IT WILL PERISH! PERISH!

WE CANNOT KILL WHAT DOES NOT *LIVE*, MEPHISTO!

EVEN WITH MY MAGICAL *SOULSWORD* AND SORCEROUS ABILITIES...AND YOUR *GOD-LIKE* POWERS... WE CANNOT DESTROY WHAT HAS NO *FORM!*

IT *DEFIES* US, MEPHISTO! IT *DEFIES* US!

YOU... YOU...

...YOU ARE *RIGHT*, CHAMPION OF LIMBO.

WHAT SHALL WE DO?

WE CAN *RETREAT!* WE CAN PLAN A DEFENSE! LET'S FORGET ABOUT *HONOR* FOR A FEW MOMENTS AND COME BACK TO FACE THIS NIGHTMARE ON OUR *OWN* TERMS!

BIND YOUR POWER TO MINE, NOW!

IT IS *DONE.*

MAGIK'S CRACKLING STEPPING DISK RIPS THEM FROM THE DYING HEART OF HADES.

BEHIND THEM, THE AGELESS BASTION OF INFERNAL POWER SHUDDERS AS THE UNNATURAL BLACKNESS SHRIEKS AND SPLINTERS AROUND IT.

AND THEN, WITH ITS VERY STONES SCREAMING, HADES FALLS.

LIMBO, THE FRONTIER SECTION OF THE SPLINTER REALMS...

...A PLACE WHICH THE X-MEN--MY TEAM OF FELLOW MUTANTS--ARE NO STRANGERS TO...

...AND ONE MY FORMER GIRLFRIEND AMANDA SEFTON--NOW KNOWN AS MAGIK-- IS STILL GETTING USED TO.

MAGIK HAS BEEN AWAY FAR TOO LONG ON HER QUEST TO MEPHISTO'S REALM. I'M STARTING TO WORRY...

...WHEN I HEAR A COMMOTION OUTSIDE MY QUARTERS.

WHAT'S GOING ON?

THEY SAY SHE IS RETURNING, KURT WAGNER...

I DON'T WAIT. MY TRAINING AS AN X-MAN TELLS ME TO TELEPORT DIRECTLY TO THE MARTIAL YARD...

...WHERE THE OTHER GREAT BEINGS OF OUR MAKESHIFT ALLIANCE AWAIT...

SHAKOOOM!

OUR MASTER *RETURNS!* AND THE LORD OF LIES IS *WITH* HER!

AMANDA! I WAS BEGINNING TO FEAR THE *WORST!*

WE *ALL* WERE, MISTRESS!

THANK YOU, KURT...DUKE BLEYS.

WELL MET, *DORMAMMU*, EATER OF SOULS.

WELL MET, *MEPHISTO*, LORD OF LIES.

ALL OF YOU! THE ENEMY IS APPROACHING *FAST!*

IF WE ARE TO MEET IT, IT MUST BE AS *ONE* RESISTING FORCE.

I CALL...A *CONVOCATION!*

FROM THE GASPS OF THE DENIZENS OF LIMBO, I DON'T NEED AMANDA TO EXPLAIN HOW EXTRAORDINARY A CONVOCATION IS.

A PARLIAMENT ATTENDED BY THE MYRIAD LORDS AND RULERS OF THE SPLINTER REALMS. IN THE LAST FORTY-SEVEN THOUSAND YEARS, IT HAS ONLY BEEN DONE TWICE BEFORE.

THE SUMMONS GOES OUT... BY RIDER, MYSTIC MESSENGER, AUGURY, CARRIER BEAST.

AT DAWN THE NEXT DAY, I AM ON THE TERRACES OF LIMBO'S FORTRESS TO SEE THE FIRST ARRIVE.

LORD MILITANT PHEMOLUS AND HIS HUSCARLS, MOUNTED ON POLYP STEEDS THAT WHEEZE IN THE AIR.

THEN THE REST, ONE BY ONE, THROUGH THE MORNING...

...DAEMON-LORDS ASTRIDE PHANTOM DRAGONS, TYRANT WIZARDS IN AIR-MACHINES, QUEENS OF THE DAMNED WITH ENDLESS RETINUES, FORMLESS THINGS THAT MATERIALIZE IN PENTAGRAMS...

...THE MURANAI, THE HIGH SEERS OF NOX, LORD PLUTO, HEDRON THE FACETED, THOG, THE HAEMOVORE KINGS OF THE OUTER DARK...

...A THOUSAND AND A THOUSAND MORE...THE MONARCHS OF THE SPLINTER REALMS, DRAWN TOGETHER IN ON[illegible]

CONVOCATION BEGINS AT MIDNIGHT, IN THE GREAT VAULT OF LIMBO, A STRUCTURE SO LARGE IT DWARFS THE MILLIONS ASSEMBLED WITHIN.

I AM AN X-MAN. I HAVE SEEN MANY WONDERS. FEW COMPARE TO THIS.

LORDS OF THE SPLINTERED REALMS! CONVOCATION IS CALLED! I AM *MAGIK*, *CUSTODIAN* OF *LIMBO*, THE SPACE BETWEEN YOUR FIEFDOMS AND BUFFER AGAINST THE *VOID*. HARKEN TO ME!

FOR COUNTLESS EONS YOU HAVE WAGED WAR *AGAINST* EACH OTHER... BICKERED, PLOTTED, SQUABBLED, VIED.

NOW A TIME APPROACHES WHERE THAT *MUST* BE SET ASIDE...

...OR WE WILL *ALL* PERISH!

AN ENEMY APPROACHES THAT CAN BEST *ANY* OF YOU INDIVIDUALLY, NO MATTER HOW VAUNTED YOU BELIEVE YOURSELF TO BE.

THE ENEMY HAS *PROVED* THIS POWER ALREADY...SO WHAT *ANSWERS* DO YOU HAVE?

AND THEY REPLY...FROM ALL CORNERS OF THE VAULT...

D'SPAYRE...

WHAT *GREAT FOE* IS THIS YOU SPEAK OF? I KNOW *NOTHING* OF IT!

SIFFROR OF THE LIFELESS...

NOR I! IS THIS NOT SIMPLY A *PLOY* TO UNDERMINE OUR FEUDAL THRONES?

MALEVOLENCE, KING OF PAIN...

YOU FOOL YOURSELVES! FROM MY BORDER WATCHTOWERS, I SAW *HELL* FALL! IN FLAME AND TERROR!

UMAR...

WHAT SHOULD WE CARE IF OUR GREAT RIVALS SUFFER?

I SAY LET HELL BURN!

THE DREAD DORMAMMU...

SUCH *LOYALTY*, MY DEAR! I HAVE *SEEN* THIS ENEMY FIRST-HAND. SHOULD IT NOT TELL YOU SOMETHING THAT I *AGREE* WITH MAGIK'S PROPOSAL?

WE MUST JOIN. UNITE. STAND TOGETHER... OR *NONE* OF US WILL SURVIVE.

SKARABRUS THE STALKER...

WHAT DO *YOU* SUGGEST, MISTRESS OF LIMBO? WHAT ACTION SHOULD WE TAKE?

A *PACT*, STALKER-LORD. A FORMAL PLEDGE OF *ALLIANCE*, SWORN IN BLOOD AND SORCERY.

AN ENCHANTMENT THAT WILL MAKE THE SPLINTER REALMS *ONE REALM* AGAIN, STRONG AND COMPLETE AGAINST OUR ENEMY.

MOLGOTHA...

SUCH A PACT COULD BE BROKEN BY *NONE* HERE! ON PAIN OF *DEATH!*

OR THERE CAN BE *NO TRUST* BETWEEN OLD RIVALS.

VILIVEN, SEAMSTRESS-QUEEN OF THE TAPESTRY ISLANDS...

TRUE, MOLGOTHA! WE HAVE DUELED FOR CENTURIES! I WOULD *NEVER* ENTER A COMPACT WITH YOU UNLESS THERE WERE *STRINGENT* PENALTIES!

BRUTUS KLOR, CHIEFTAIN OF THE MURDER-CLANS...

NOR I! BUT I AM *CONVINCED* BY WHAT I HAVE SEEN... WE *MUST* MAKE THIS PACT OR FACE EXTINCTION.

PLUTO, GOD OF THE UNDERWORLD HADES...

EXTINCTION HAS ITS PLACE... BUT LET THAT BE. I CONCUR. A *PACT.* SHALL ANY HERE DISSENT?

THE STRIDENT, VENOMOUS AUTHORITY OF PLUTO IS CHALLENGED BY NONE. THE VAULT IS QUIET.

I SHIVER.

THEN LET THE PACT BE *MADE...*

SORCERY, FERAL AND LOOSE, CUTS THE AIR. ARCANE SYMBOLS OF POWER, SO POTENT IT HURTS MY EYES TO SEE THEM, SHIMMER IN THE ETHER...

THE HOST OF CONVOCATION WAILS AS ONE, A MAGICAL CHANT THAT SHAKES THE VAULT...

AND THEN IT IS DONE. IN A SHOWER OF ENERGY, A MINGLING OF OATHS AND DAEMON-BLOOD...

...THE PACT OF UNION IS MADE.

IT IS THEN THAT I SEE DUKE BLEYS SLIP FROM THE VAULT.

I FOLLOW AT A DISTANCE, INTRIGUED... CLOSE ENOUGH TO SEE HIM HISS URGENTLY, SECRETLY, INTO A DEVICE OF SOME SORT.

I'VE SEEN ENOUGH.

BAMF!

EH?

WOULD YOU SPY UPON ME, MORTAL?

UGHN!

WHAT ARE YOU *DOING*, BLEYS? WHAT *MISCHIEF* ARE YOU WORKING?

PTUI!

NOTHING YOU'LL LIVE TO SPEAK OF, X-MAN!

YOU'VE SEEN *TOO MUCH!*

AGHH!

FAR *FAR* TOO MUCH!

RAAAGHH!

YOU WANT THE TRUTH? DO YOU?

THEN SEE WHO AND *WHAT* I TRULY AM!

KNOW ME AS...

...S'YM!

S'YM? FORMER LACKEY OF *BELASCO?!**

MIND YOUR *TONGUE*, MORTAL, LEST I RIP IT FROM YOUR MOUTH!

BUT I THOUGHT YOUR TREASONOUS THREAT WAS *LONG GONE?*

*THESE TWO FIRST MET IN *UNCANNY X-MEN #160.* --MIKE

AS DID I, S'YM.

WHAT *TREACHERY* HAVE YOU WROUGHT?

YOU HAVE WROUGHT IT, "MISTRESS." AS *DUKE BLEYS* I MERELY *ENCOURAGED* IT.

YOU HAVE UNIFIED THE SPLINTER REALMS IN AN UNBREAKABLE PACT... FOR WHAT? TO *STAND FIRM* AGAINST THE FOE?

NO! TO MAKE YOURSELVES ALL *ONE EASY TARGET* FOR MY *MASTER!*

YOUR MASTER? WHAT?!

AMANDA, LOOK! LOOK!

OUTSIDE, ABOVE THE WALLS OF LIMBO, THE SKY RIPS OPEN... BURNS ... DECAYS.

LAUGHING TRIUMPHANTLY, THE **ENEMY** IS HERE...

...VISIBLE FOR THE FIRST TIME.

NEXT

BOUND FOR DESTRUCTION